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Soon, though, the valley route was relegated to branch line status. The area was assured by the railroad that there was no intention of abandoning the trackage between Scranton and Forest City, but the sight of even a short local freight became a rarity. Weeds and brush began to encroach on the right-of-way, and at the sound of an air horn, residents would look toward the tracks in disbelief. Operations were begun to remove the coal in the fills which had originally made the roadbed level, and even though the tracks were replaced, the D&H "embargoed" the line, suspending service to the Mid- and Upper-Valley in late 1983.

Such a decision by the company struck particularly hard for several reasons. One was the knowledge that the area north of Scranton would face serious trouble if its community leaders attempted to attract new industry to the area, yet no rail service was available. Another consideration was that of existing industry, which in many cases was dependent on rail service for delivery of raw materials, or shipment of finished products. A third reason, though, was of a completely different character.

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Even though the railroad had stated that it was simply embargoing the line, rather than filing for abandonment and removing the rails, Lackawanna County Commissioner-elect Joseph Corcoran sensed the possibility that the railroad might vanish. Noting that it would be a "travesty if those lines come up now," Corcoran, along with fellow Commissioner-elect Ray Alberigi, suggested that a joint Scranton/Lackawanna County authority be created, so that it could be ready to purchase the line if it should be determined that the D&H planned to abandon it.

By March of 1984, plans were underway for the acquisition of the railroad. One month earlier, the Commissioners had expressed concern that the Mid-Valley Industrial Park might be jeopardized without rail service, and that Carbondale's hopes to turn the former D&H yards into industrial sites would also be in trouble.

Previous to Commissioners Corcoran and Alberigi's taking office, Scranton Mayor James McNulty had also played a part in the preservation of the track, in that he had met with D&H officials and asked that no immediate action be taken on the scrapping of the line. Late in March, Carbondale Mayor Charlotte Moro joined with McNulty, Corcoran and Alberigi, in meeting with David Fink, Executive Vice-President of Guilford Transportation Industries, the new parent company of the D&H. Fink had words of praise for the officials, noting their sense of purpose, as well as their enthusiasm. A tour of the line by Corcoran, engineer Dominic Surace, and D&H representatives was scheduled for early April.

Two months later, a similar tour was conducted by PennDOT, as the first step toward obtaining state funding for the project. At the time, it was observed that the line did indeed seem to have potential for development of traffic.

Meanwhile, Attorney Larry Malski, who had been appointed railroad counsel to the county in late May, had contacted shippers along the line, and reported that the responses had been encouraging. He predicted that a shippers' association would eventually be formed.

Malski also suggested that the original plan, whereby the county would be leasing the trackage from the D&H, might be a less than desirable arrangement. Instead, he recommended that the track simply be purchased outright.

By early October, Malski informed the newly-organized Lackawanna County Rail Users Association that the D&H had backed off from its original plan, which had called for the removal of the heavy rail on the line, and its replacement with a lighter duty substitute.

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Two weeks later, a public hearing was held to obtain input on the creation of such an authority. Testimony was given by Robert Davis, then Carbondale City Manager, Steven Smith of Visqueen, Michael Fomous of Gentex, Justus Hart of Chesapeake Corporation, Richard Kane of Kane Warehousing, and Dr. S. Robert Powell of the Carbondale Historical Society and Museum, Inc.

Smith cited the cost of bringing in raw materials to the Visqueen plant in Carbondale, explaining that since the embargo, his company had been forced to truck in supplies from Taylor, where its railroad cars were now being delivered to, Fomous stated that if Gentex had rail service available, "it would be very advantageous." Davis said that rail service was essential to Carbondale's plan to develop the former D&H yards. Kane noted that his company had recently installed a \$2,100,000 freezer, and would never have done so had it known that rail service would soon be unavailable. Powell stated that railroads had been the reason for the prosperity of the area to begin with, and that it was time for the railroads to bring that prosperity back, with not only industrial service, but also a railroad-based tourism industry.

With such obvious support for the plan, the Lackawanna County Railroad Authority was created on November 14, with Dominic Surace, John Murgia, Ed E Rogers, Paul Hart and

John Hart as members.

"We're taking a step forward to provide additional services to the people of Lackawanna County," said Corcoran at the time. "It's our hope that this will result in new employment opportunities for the people of the Upper-Valley."

Less than one month later, the Authority authorized the purchase of the 16-mile line from the D&H. At the same time, Malski was appointed Executive Director of the Authority. The papers were signed by Rogers and Hart on December 27, and by Charles McKenna for the D&H, on January 11, 1985.

Early in February, bids from companies interested in running the line for the county as "designated operator" were received. Malski explained that of the seven bids received, the successful party would be determined by deciding which proposal offered the best service to the shippers, as well as the best financial return to the county.

On March 10, Blue Mountain Management Services, of Wyncote, PA, was awarded the contract. The company also operates the Panther Valley Railroad in Carbon County, and the Moxahalla Valley Railroad in Zanesville, OH. Blue Mountain was chosen in the belief that it was the best qualified to develop the potential of the line.

The name of the railroad, chosen by Blue Mountain, is Lackawanna Valley Railroad, and in a move which warned the heart of virtually every railfan, the company's locomotive was painted in the color scheme of the former NYO&W. Conveniently, Blue Mountain found that it was also able to adopt the O&W logo, with only a very minor change.

With operations underway by early summer, and the first revenue train arriving in Carbondale on July 3, it thus appears that the railroad line which helped create the economic life in the Lackawanna Valley over a century ago, may prove to be the deciding factor in the revitalization of that life in the years to come.

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#### MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONIES 1985

The Memorial Day Committee of Carbondale, Jay J. Sara, Chairman, sponsored the following ceremonies in Carbondale's Memorial Park on the morning of May 27, 1985:

Master of Ceremonies...Mark Evans, Legion Commander  
Star-Spangled Banner...Carbondale Area High School Band  
Invocation...Father Walter Repasky, Mount Carmel Church  
Musical Selection...Carbondale Area High School Band  
Remarks...Mayor Charlotte Moro  
General John Logan's Orders...Frank DiBiasi, Student Council President, Sacred Heart High School  
Lincoln's Gettysburg Address...Tammy Mazza, Senior Class President, Carbondale Area High School  
Principal Speaker...Earnest Preate, D. A.  
Remarks...S. Robert Powell, President of the Carbondale Historical Society and Museum, Inc.  
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READING OF THE ROLL CALL: G.A.R., Joseph Kelly, Marine Corps League; Spanish American War, Tom Weirick, A. R. M.; World War I, Thomas Kane, American Legion; World War II, Mark Evans, D.A.V.; Korean War, R. McDonough, Soc. 28th Div.; Viet Nam War, John Langan, American Legion; Deceased Committee Member, Jay J. Sara, D.A.V.

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